

# "Another Successful Piping Plover Nesting Season in Rhode Island"

During the 2010 nesting season, the Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge staff managed 13 beaches both on and off-refuge for piping plovers, 5 of which also had nesting least terns. Piping plover numbers continue to increase in Rhode Island and this year the state supported 71 pairs and produced 130 chicks that survived to fledging for a 1.83 productivity. This productivity is above the 1.5 goal set from the Atlantic Coast Piping Plover Recovery Plan that is needed to maintain an increasing population.

Piping plover highlights this year include high productivity at both Napatree Conservation Area and Ninigret Conservation Area and Refuge; and an increase in the number of nesting pairs at Ninigret. In 2009, Ninigret had 6 nesting pairs and a 0.86 productivity while in 2010 we had 12 nesting pairs with a 2.16 productivity. Napatree's productivity increased from 1.6 in 2009 to 2.22 in 2010. At Ninigret, we attribute this success to predation control conducted over the winter. At Napatree, we continue to work closely with partners to ensure the protection of natural resources at that site through education and enforcement, which seems to be working well.

In 2010, least tern productivity was 0.27 from 529 nesting pairs. This productivity is equivalent to that in 2009, but the number of nesting pairs increased by 405, mainly due to the 443 pairs that nested on Sandy Point. Unfortunately, high predation pressure continues to be the main reason for nest failure and low fledgling rates.

Funding for this program comes from a cooperative agreement with the State of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. This state wildlife grant is an agreement that funds piping plover management for 2009-2011. This grant is made possible through match provided by landowners and volunteers. In 2010, landowners provided approximately \$55,000 of in-kind match and volunteers contributed approximately \$50,000 of in-kind match towards the state wildlife grant.



Field crew checking on the plovers at East Beach Watch Hill, Westerly, RI. (Photo taken by Dorie Stolley July 19, 2010)



Banded piping plover at East Beach Watch Hill, Westerly, RI. Taken by Russ Thompson on April 30, 2010. This plover was banded on February 6, 2010 on North Andros Island, the Bahamas and successfully bred at East Beach Watch Hill, fledling four chicks. It was re-sighted July 13th during its fall migration near Ocracoke Inlet, NC, and successfully made it back to the Bahamas where it is currently overwintering.